Child Labour Act in India

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Child labor has been a long-standing issue in India, affecting millions of children and depriving them of their right to education, health, and a safe childhood. To address this, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986 and later amended in 2016 to make it more effective in eliminating child labor.

The Act primarily aims to prohibit the employment of children below the age of 14 in all occupations and processes, except in cases where they work in family businesses or as child artists under certain conditions. It also regulates the working conditions of adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years, allowing them to work only in non-hazardous occupations.

The 2016 amendment was a significant step forward. It completely banned the employment of children under 14 years in any form of labor, including domestic work, shop assistance, and factory work. This provision has received criticism as it can be misused and blur the line between help and exploitation.

For adolescents (14–18 years), the law prohibits employment in hazardous industries such as mining, chemical production, and construction. This recognizes the need to protect adolescents while still allowing them to earn if the work is safe.

The Act also introduced stricter penalties for employers:

For a first offence: imprisonment up to 2 years or a fine of up to ₹50,000.

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For repeat offences: imprisonment of up to 3 years.

The law also provides for the creation of a Rehabilitation Fund to support rescued children by providing education, vocational training, and financial aid for reintegration into society.

Despite these legal provisions, implementation remains a major challenge, especially in rural and economically backward areas where poverty and lack of education continue to force children into labor.

In conclusion, while the Child Labour Act in India lays a strong legal foundation, stronger enforcement and community awareness are essential to completely eradicate child labor and protect every child's right to a safe and educated future.

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